

binary sunset by dhufflebee

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Summary: Mike shows the first Star Wars movie to El, and she is so enraptured by the binary sunset scene that Mike kinda forgets about the movie and just stares at her. A lot of thoughts and tears and softness are involved, too.

binary sunset

Mike shows the first Star Wars movie to El, and she is so enraptured by the binary sunset scene that Mike kinda forgets about the movie and just stares at her. A lot of thoughts and tears and softness are involved, too.

Based on a tumblr prompt I sent to someone... before resolving to write the fic myself.

Who knew this couple of awkward teens would be the thing that brought me back to writing fanfiction - hopefully I did them justice.

Mike didn't think El's eyes could get brighter than they already were.

He had been planning the day for a while, and he had been more and more nervous as it approached. What if she laughed at him? Rolled her eyes at him? *What if she didn't like one of his favorite movies ever?* Mike knew such a train of thought was stupid, that El would never be mean to him and mock his passions, but deep down he was afraid the tiniest thing might drive her away.

She had been back for so little time that, every so often, Mike still found himself catching his breath when she appeared in his line of sight while he was distracted. He had felt so desolate and angry while El was gone, reaching out into the void every single day hoping to catch a glimpse of her spirit, hoping to find support in those hardest months, that when she had finally reappeared and he had looked at her and smiled at her and hugged her, he had felt like something (*no, everything*) was cracking and being put back together at the same time. And the rebuilding part wasn't over yet: every time El laughed, or scrunched her nose, or tucked her hair behind her ear, Mike could feel a spark, like a little part of his soul was going back into the right spot inside of him.

But at the same time, the previous year had left a scar on his heart (on both of their hearts), and he feared that the slightest incomprehension, the smallest silly thing could open the wound back again, throwing him into that dark hollow place where he had suffered so much.

At that moment, though, Mike's head was in a whirlwind, all these thoughts progressively silenced by one distinct feeling: *how on heart can El be so beautiful? And how are her eyes so much brighter than ever?* He caught himself staring at her sitting beside him, her knees up to her chest and her feet bare on the couch. He tried to avert his eyes, and he managed to for maybe ten seconds, during which he dazedly looked at the tv screen. The way El's hands were resting on her ankles and the way she had draped the cotton blanket on her shoulders as if it was a cloak, though, kept drawing Mike's attention away from the movie. Not that he cared much about Star Wars, that afternoon.

No, scratch that: Mike cared. Not really about the movie *per se*, but about what El would think of it. He longed to share his passions with her, to introduce her to all the things he loved (and hopefully to be introduced to what she loved, as well), and he had decided Star Wars was maybe the best place to start. The story was compelling, the characters well-rounded, and the sceneries? He could gush for hours about those three movies, and he really hoped El would be willing to listen to him after that day.

The only problem was, Mike couldn't remember a damn thing about Star Wars. Not while he was looking at El's hair, at the way her curls were kind of disappearing now that she was letting her hair grow, but were still visible in the loose strands that would fall around her face. And neither while he was musing on the adorableness of her nose, perfectly shaped at the center of her profile, just above those cute pink lips of hers, whose smile and shape and warmth he had missed so much and was looking forward to never miss again.

Maybe he would need to ask El for a refresh about Star Wars, all things considered. For all of Mike's staring, she had never looked away from the screen, so focused on what was going on that she was barely breathing. Most of all, Mike was in awe of the brightness of her eyes – and it wasn't merely a reflection of the screen, but a light that he knew was coming from inside her, a fire they were trying to rekindle together and that was slowly getting stronger with each passing day. Maybe his eyes were that bright too, when he watched Star Wars... or maybe they were at that moment, while he was contemplating El. Had the circumstances been different (*hadn't he felt so damn awkward*), he would have asked El about his own eyes

(jesus), but he really didn't want to disturb her (sure Mike, that's the reason).

The minutes were passing by, and Mike's brain was subconsciously registering the scenes of the movie as they were unwinding. He half-heard a dialogue about a farm, a harvest, and an academy, and he knew exactly which moment was approaching. Those few notes were enough to give him goosebumps, even though this time he suspected his emotional response to the Force Theme might be enhanced by watching El being enraptured by it. There it was, a binary sunset he could recognize without the need to see it, the music swelling, and—*(holy shit, are those tears? why is El crying? shit shit shit shit shit shit)*

Mike froze on the couch. Damn, those weren't the kind of tears he sometimes saw mom or Nancy shed in front of the tv – El was *bawling*. She was shaking, water falling down her cheeks and dropping from her chin, her bright eyes getting redder and redder.

"El? W-what's happening?" Mike's voice was as shaky as El's shoulder, and in the back of his mind he hated that he wasn't able to project calmness and safety for her sake, even more so in such a mundane moment.

"Oh, Mike", El answered in a tiny voice, with her face half-buried between her knees and tears still dampening her cheeks. "I'm sorry, I didn't want to cry like this, but I really can't help it!"

(Ah shit damn it, I'm so stupid, I should have never made her watch Star Wars without checking beforehand somehow, and now I made her relieve god knows which awful moment and she hates it and she hates me and—)

"It's just... It's so beautiful!" El almost yelled that last word, but her voice cracked, and a new bout of tears pooled under her eyes.

"What?" Mike was taken aback, unable to properly process El's words while his own internal monologue was still berating him. "What?" He must have been looking silly, eyes wide open and expression dumbfounded, because El smiled a little and reached for Mike's hand, grasping it with her own and gently tugging his arm.

Mike shook his head and looked at El's face: her eyes weren't actually

sad nor angry nor distraught... if possible, they were shining ever more than before. He could feel himself frowning for a second, but then something clicked. "Were those happy tears? Like, that many?" He asked her, eager for an affirmative answer, hoping he hadn't fucked up completely.

Instead of answering directly, though, El laughed, and Mike inhaled sharply, before realizing that she wasn't laughing *at him*, but that it was a genuinely joyous sound. Maybe he hadn't ruined it all, maybe he'd been stupid for doubting himself so much – and El, too.

Her fingers still entangled with his, El scooted closer to Mike on the couch, reaching with her other hand towards his forehead to smooth the lines between his brows. "Mike, hey. Those were emotional tears, but from a good emotion... I'm not really sure how to explain it but, I don't know, that sunset, and Luke looked so lost, and that music! It really spoke to me, I loved it, but it seems like the only way I could express it was by crying?" El was fumbling with the hem of the blanket and she wasn't looking at Mike anymore, a shade of uncertainty in her expression.

While El tried her best to explain her tears, Mike felt something warm and soft grow in his chest, something similar what he had felt the very first time he had managed to make her laugh. He smiled fondly looking at her small hands and at the spots on her jeans still wet with tears, and reached tentatively with his hand to brush El's cheek. As soon as she felt the light touch of his fingers, she turned her head towards him and smiled, gently pressing her face on his hand. Mike loved it when El did that, feeling (*hoping*) she was so eager for contact as he was while his own hand cupped her cheek, her hair all over her temple and his fingers.

"Thank you for showing me that, Mike. I'm happy I saw that scene with you."

Mike thought about telling her that he hadn't been *actually watching the movie*, but he figured it would sound silly, given how much he had insisted on them seeing it together. Instead, he leaned on the backrest of the couch a bit more, positioning himself so that El could rest comfortably on him. Mike would have gladly spent the rest of the afternoon, or of the week, or of his life (*woah there, okay*) in that

exact position, with El's head on his shoulder and him absentmindedly playing with her hair. "Thank you for being here with me", Mike answered, and he felt El smile against his polo shirt.

A few minutes passed, aliens and spaceships and lasers still filling the screens, but Mike wasn't paying attention, being focused more on El than on anything else, on how good it felt to be able to hug her and touch her and talk to her. On how at home he felt with her beside him.

"Mike?" El asked suddenly, her voice a bit muffled. "Do you think we can go back with the movie a bit? We missed some scenes and I'm not sure I'm understanding everything... And I really want to watch this properly because it's your favorite movie and I want to know every part of you and I want to love this as much as you do." El propped herself on her arm and turned towards Mike, blushing a bit and looking him in the eyes.

Mike smiled so fondly he felt he might start to cry, the warm bubble in his chest growing even more. "Of course," he said, before kissing her softly on the forehead (*oh, this is a first, it feels nice... why have I never done this before?*). He grabbed the remote and rewind the movie until just before the binary sunset scene, so that they could watch it – again, properly – together. Hopefully El wouldn't cry again, or maybe she would and he would as well, and honestly it wouldn't even matter, because that scene had just become his favorite one in Star Wars, and maybe some wonderful music would be the perfect cover for the tears of joy and hope and dedicated affection he felt the need to shed.